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ABSTRACT

This paper examines who was present and voted at an important faculty meeting at Hofstra University convened to consider changes in the Faculty Statutes relating to the structure and function of the University Senate. Full-time faculty members, selected members of the administration, some members of the library staff, and a small number of students were eligible to vote. The findings indicated that 49 percent of those eligible to vote took ballots and 42 percent voted. Relatively high rates of participation were found among the students and the top administrators. Slightly less than 50 percent of the faculty participated. Faculty participation is presented by academic rank, academic unit, and department. The rate of participation was highest for full professors and teaching fellows and lowest for the instructors and adjunct ranks. Among the academic units, the rate was highest among the social scientists and lowest among members of the humanities. (AF)

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CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF HIGHER EDUCATION

HOFSTRA UNIVERSITY

Attendance at an Important Faculty Meeting*

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An important, special meeting of the Hofstra University faculty was held on Friday afternoon, December 11, 1970 to consider changes in the Faculty Statutes relating to the structure and function of the University Senate. A Blue Ribbon Committee had recommended a number of changes including a change from an all-faculty senate to one consisting of 18 faculty members, 13 students, and four administrators.

The vote at the meeting was taken by a closed printed ballot. As each person entered the hall, he was given a ballot, and his name was checked on a list of eligible voters. The present report represents an analysis of the data pertaining to those persons who obtained ballots at the meeting. These data provide information concerning the extent to which various subgroups of University personnel participated in the voting process.

There were 458 persons eligible to vote. Of these, 226 or 49% received ballots. However, only 193, 42%, actually voted. The remaining 33 persons were given ballots and either returned them or kept them, but did not vote. Since we do not know who voted, or how they voted, the present analysis is based on the 226 persons, 49% of the eligible total, to whom ballots were distributed.

The persons eligible to vote came from four groups: full-time faculty members, selected members of the administration, some members of the library staff, and a small number of students. The extent to which members of each of these groups participated in the balloting is given in Table 1. These data indicate that the extent of participation varied among the four groups. Although slightly less than 50% of the faculty and administration voted, the participation was higher for members of the library staff, and highest for the student group. Interestingly, the data are at variance with an occasional argument at the meeting relating to student irresponsibility and lack of concern.

HE 002 017

*The tabulation and statistical calculations in this report were performed by Mrs. Anne Politi.

Table 1

Percent of Eligible Voters Who Took Ballots

	Eligible	Took Ballots	Percent
Faculty	372	176	47%
Administration	40	19	48%
Library Staff	26	15	58%
Students	20	16	80%
Total	458	226	49%

The data were further analyzed by dividing the faculty and administration into smaller groupings in order to see whether there were differential degrees of participation. As expected, several differences emerged.

Consider members of the administration first. The highest rate of participation, 89%, was found among the members of the Provost's Council consisting of the Academic Deans, the Provost and his associates. The President's Council, consisting of the President, Vice Presidents, and one or two others, showed 75% participation. Among the 23 persons who do not belong to either of the above groups, only six or 26% voted.

The votes by different subgroups of faculty members are given in Tables 2, 3, and 4. Table 2 indicates the percent at each rank of the professoriate who took ballots.

Table 2

Percent of Eligible Faculty Who Participated, By Academic Rank

	Eligible	Took Ballots	Percent
Professor	64	38	59%
Associate Professor	98	45	46%
Assistant Professor	99	45	45%
Instructor	85	36	42%
Adjunct ranks	12	4	33%
Teaching Fellows	14	8	57%
Total	372	176	47%

As indicated in this table, there is a linear trend by rank. The higher the rank, the larger the percent who participated, with close to 50% more participation among full professors than among instructors. There was also a comparatively high rate of participation among the Fellows of New College.

Table 3 gives the data on the extent of participation among the members of the several academic units of the University. The data indicate few differences. One finding that is somewhat surprising, however, is the comparatively low rate of participation among the Humanities faculty, which contrasts significantly with the comparatively high rate for the Social Science faculty.

Table 3

Percent of Eligible Faculty Who Participated, By Academic Unit

	Eligible	Took Ballots	Percent
Liberal Arts College	232	113	49%
Humanities	103	39	38%
Natural Science	54	24	44%
Social Science	75	51	68 %
Business	34	15	44%
Education	71	31	44%
Non-Divisional	35	16	46%
Total	372	176	47%

The percent participation was tabulated separately for each department within the University. These rates varied, as might be expected, from 0% to 100%. The departments with very high or very low participation rates were as follows.

Table 4

Departments with Very High or Very Low Rates of Participation

	Total	Percent
Anthropology	3	100%
Counsellor Education	3	100%
Foundations Education	7	100%
Insurance	1	100%
Social Science	3	100%
Engineering	8	88%
Political Science	8	88%
Economics	9	78%
Philosophy	7	71%
Art History	4	25%
Comparative Literature	9	22%
Special Education	7	14%
Elementary Education	24	12%
Communications	2	0%
Computer Science	1	0%
French	6	0%
Geography	2	0%
Humanities	1	0%
Physics	7	0%

Finally, the data were tabulated by sex. A total of 51% of the 271 males eligible to vote did vote, compared to 38% of the eligible females!

Summary. The data indicate that 49% of those eligible to vote took ballots, and 42% voted. The percent of eligibles who took ballots varied among the several constituencies of the University. Relatively high rates of participation were found among the students and the top administrators. Slightly less than 50% of the faculty participated, and the rate of participation was highest for the full professors and New College teaching fellows and lowest for the instructors and adjunct ranks. Among the several academic units, the rate of participation was highest among the social scientists and lowest among members of the humanities faculty. Finally, the rate of participation for males was quite a bit higher than that for females.